



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on December 31, 2014

VOA Calls Prospects of “Immigration Reform” in 2015 Unlikely

A report in Voice of America (VOA) on December 29 predicted that President Obama’s recent executive action to protect some illegal aliens from being deported may actually have killed prospects of the president reaching a comprehensive immigration agreement with Congress in 2015.

Voice of America is the official external broadcast institution of the U.S. federal government, which fully funds the news outlet.



The report observed that while Obama’s recent executive action allows about four million illegal immigrants in the United States to seek temporary legal status, without congressional approval, he cannot achieve “comprehensive immigration reform.”

Obama unveiled his plan in a nationwide television address on November 20. He promised those who fit his criteria — those who have been in the United States for more than five years or who have children who are U.S. citizens or legal residents — would be offered the following deal:

If you register, pass a criminal background check, and you’re willing to pay your fair share of taxes — you’ll be able to apply to stay in this country temporarily, without fear of deportation. You can come out of the shadows and get right with the law.

Obama’s plan was enacted through two steps. He issued a presidential memorandum on November 21 that created a task force among all executive departments to determine additional steps the federal government can take to ensure its programs and policies are serving diverse communities including immigrants. Though Obama sent his memorandum to all cabinet members, the Secretary of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson, was authorized and directed to publish it in the *Federal Register*.

Secretary Johnson sent his own executive action memorandum to the heads of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection expanding “deferred action” (another name for amnesty) by directing “USCIS to establish a process, similar to DACA [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals], for exercising prosecutorial discretion through the use of deferred action to certain categories of individuals, principally those who had a son or daughter who is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident.”

The plan drew immediate criticism from Republican members of Congress. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) posted on his Facebook profile: “[The president’s] actions are not only unconstitutional and in defiance of the American people who said they did not want amnesty in the 2014 elections, but they are also unfair to every immigrant who has come to our nation legally.”

Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) said he “will not sit idly by and let the President bypass Congress and our Constitution.”



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Though they test the bounds of presidential authority granted by the Constitution, the Obama executive actions still are not “comprehensive” enough for the president.

VOA quoted a statement from Tony Payan, director of the Mexico Center at Rice University’s Baker Institute, who expressed his belief that the Obama action will help many people who have been hiding because of their illegal status come out of the shadows and “essentially, become a little more integrated, in a legal, formal sense, into the American economy and the American society,” but that it “was also very counterproductive because I feel that it polarized many of the Republicans who might have been willing to do something on immigration.”

Payan also told VOA that many illegals are wary of applying for legal status because they are afraid once the government has their personal information a future presidential administration may eliminate the amnesty program and use it to initiate deportation procedures against them.

In anticipation of the administration implementing its policies in 2015, the official White House blog features a section headed, “What Additional Steps Can We Take to Improve Our Immigration System?” The blog states, in part:

Congress needs to pass comprehensive immigration reform to fully upgrade our immigration system, and the President has been clear he will continue to pursue bipartisan legislation to do that. But in the meantime, the President also issued a new directive for his Administration to continue to seek out ways to modernize and streamline our immigration system within existing authorities.

Acting within his legal authority, the President is taking important steps to fix our immigration system as much as he can, and we look forward to your recommendations for what improvements would make the biggest difference.

As the President acts, he’ll continue to work with Congress on a bipartisan bill — like the one passed by the Senate more than a year ago — that will provide a more comprehensive solution to fix our broken immigration system.

On December 4, Reuters published a report looking ahead at what to expect from the next Republican-controlled Congress with regard to immigration legislation. The reporter suggested that Republicans will focus on legislation that will strengthen the U.S.-Mexican border to discourage illegal immigration.

The report noted that following the House’s rejection of the bipartisan “Gang of Eight” immigration bill in 2013, a new strategy is emerging that would have the House take the lead on immigration legislation, in the hope of having more success in drafting a bill satisfactory to both houses of Congress. Reuters noted that the 2013 Senate bill’s “pathway to citizenship” — which was a nice-sounding euphemism for amnesty — for millions of residents here illegally “was a lightning rod for opposition.”

“I want it to start in the House,” Reuters quoted Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.), who was one of the “Gang of Eight” that drafted the Senate bill.

However, noted the report — quoting a Republican congressman who asked not to be identified — for any immigration legislation to succeed in 2015, “a lot of things have to line up and they’re not lined up now.”

And even if an immigration bill manages to pass both houses of Congress, President Obama will keep his veto pen warmed up, ready to reject any bill that does not suit his plans.

“I haven’t used the veto pen very often since I’ve been in office,” Obama said in an NPR interview



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broadcast on December 29. "Now, I suspect, there are going to be some times where I've got to pull that pen out."

Photo: AP Images

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